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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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SUBJECT: "Bank for Molds and Yeasts" ... Information from the Bureau of Agricultural and Industrial Chemistry, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Another chapter has been added to the story of research work in molds and yeasts.

These lower forms of life, you know, are extremely sensitive to disease, to accidental destruction, to contamination. A scientist working on a certain mold often spends a good part of his time with the routine of culturing the mold, plating it on sterilized agar, protecting it against contamination and even then, taking the risk of accidental losses. Because in the course of repeated cultivation, molds and yeasts can easily lose desired characteristics.

The research lab is only one place hit by this difficulty. Penicillin manufacturers have to carefully and tediously cultivate the molds from which their drug is made. Baking, cheesemaking, brewing and winemaking industries have suffered severe set-backs when the selected strains of their organisms are lost.

In the Department of Agriculture's Northern Regional Research Laboratory at Peoria, Illinois, research workers have found a way to store molds and yeasts successfully. They put the spores through a process of freezing, drying and sealing in small vacuum tubes. Spores stored by this method will keep for two years or longer. And to recultivate them, scientists simply break the tube, drop the spore material into water or nutrient broth and streak this material on culture plates.

The scientists of this laboratory are establishing a sort of bank to hold their valuable mold and yeast collection...including specimens of the molds that are the bases for penicillin making...so a certain supply of these organisms will be on hand should they be needed in an emergency. The process will safeguard a supply of the Northern Research Laboratory's valuable molds and yeasts, and it can also be used by other laboratories to hold samples of their material.

